



East Central Idaho News

BONNEVILLE, BUTTE, CLARK, CUSTER, FREMONT, JEFFERSON, LEMHI, MADISON & TETON COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The Idaho Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area's unemployment rate in January decreased one-tenth of a percentage point from December to 2.5 percent, the lowest since the summer of 2005. Year-over-year, the unemployment rate decreased nine-tenths of a percentage point as shown in East Central Idaho Table 1. An increase of almost 2,500 people in the work force, with a decrease of 430 unemployed people, brought the total labor force to almost 62,000. Bonneville County had a rate of 2.5 percent while Jefferson County had a rate of 2.7 percent. Idaho Falls, the largest city in the MSA, showed a rate of 3 percent, up four-tenths of a percentage point from the previous month but down seven-tenths of a percentage point from the same time last year.

All but one county in east central Idaho showed decreases in the unemployment rate over the month, ranging from Teton County at 2 percent to Lemhi County at 4.9 percent. Madison County was the exception, only gaining one-tenth of a percentage point as a result of semester changes and holidays for most of the university and school students. Year-over-year, all east central Idaho counties showed decreases. The average January unemployment rate for the nine counties of east central Idaho was only 2.7 percent.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Bonneville County

- The Theater Factory recently opened on First Street in the building formerly occupied by Perk's Photography. Owners Chris and Karl Peterson both bring theater experience to the new venture. Karl has been a teacher at Idaho Falls High School for 16 years with two degrees in theater while Chris was a semi-professional actor in Salt Lake City. The Petersons will offer acting

East Central Idaho Table 1: Idaho Falls MSA Labor Force & Employment
Bonneville and Jefferson counties

	Jan 2006*	Dec 2005	Jan 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	61,850	60,680	59,380	1.9	4.2
Unemployment	1,570	1,600	2,000	-1.9	-21.5
% of Labor Force Unemployed	2.5	2.6	3.4		
Total Employment	60,280	59,080	57,380	2.0	5.1
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	61,050	60,790	58,610	0.4	4.2
Unemployment	2,090	1,450	2,510	44.1	-16.7
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.4	2.4	4.3		
Total Employment	58,960	59,340	56,100	-0.6	5.1
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	52,560	53,370	46,570	-1.5	12.9
Goods-Producing Industries	6,950	7,240	6,210	-4.0	11.9
Natural Resources & Mining	30	40	40	-25.0	-25.0
Construction	3,660	3,920	3,100	-6.6	18.1
Manufacturing	3,260	3,280	3,070	-0.6	6.2
Food Manufacturing	1,130	1,110	1,040	1.8	8.7
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	220	210	210	4.8	4.8
Machinery Manufacturing	140	150	160	-6.7	-12.5
Other Manufacturing	1,770	1,810	1,660	-2.2	6.6
Service-Providing Industries	45,610	46,130	40,360	-1.1	13.0
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	13,170	13,520	12,700	-2.6	3.7
Wholesale Trade	4,110	4,160	3,830	-1.2	7.3
Retail Trade	7,430	7,720	7,350	-3.8	1.1
Utilities	50	50	50	0.0	0.0
Transportation	1,580	1,590	1,470	-0.6	7.5
Information	1,140	1,150	1,080	-0.9	5.6
Financial Activities	2,100	2,120	1,980	-0.9	6.0
Professional & Business Services	9,530	9,420	5,700	1.2	67.2
Educational & Health Services	6,820	6,880	6,330	-0.9	7.7
Leisure & Hospitality	4,230	4,230	4,090	0.0	3.4
Other Services	1,940	1,960	1,890	-1.0	2.6
Government Education	3,560	3,490	3,390	2.0	5.0
Government Administration	3,120	3,360	3,200	-7.1	-2.5

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

classes and acting opportunities in local productions for students in kindergarten through high school. The duo is building a new stage with seating for about 100 people. The Petersons plan to establish non-profit status and recruit businesses to help finance scholarships for acting classes.

- The District Seven Health Department plans to break ground this fall on a new building and move out of the building they have outgrown over the last 30 years. The new location is four acres on Hollipark

Drive, south of Farm Bureau Insurance and Inter-mountain Gas in the Idaho Falls area. The department gained approval to purchase the land for a new building site in 2002. The new building will be built in an “X” shape to accommodate and separate the department’s four main sections: family services, preparedness, nutrition and environmental health. The environmental health division will have a separate entrance for contractors. The new building will provide District Seven with 10,000 more square feet of space and twice as many parking spaces. Additional space allows the department to expand educational programs and increase clinical services. District Seven serves the counties in east central Idaho. At this point, Bonneville County plans to purchase District Seven’s current building on E Street and will decide among several options for its future use.

- The A&W restaurant on 17th Street in Idaho Falls is now called Ray’s In & Out, named for owner Ray Cook who recently withdrew from the A&W franchise. Cook began working for A&W in 1948. In 1979, he and his wife bought the restaurant on 17th Street along with two other franchises from the original A&W owners. Now that they are not under franchise rules, the Cooks have made changes that include serving burgers on buns made fresh daily on location and real draft root beer in frosty mugs.
- Two doctors that set up a kidney dialysis center in Pocatello less than a year ago are planning to open an even larger center in Idaho Falls this summer in the Creekside Plaza on Sunnyside Road. Brothers Dr. Fahim Rahim and Dr. Naeem Rahim are both board certified in nephrology and internal medicine, and treat chronic kidney disease, uncontrolled high blood pressure and diabetes-related kidney problems. They are also on the medical staff at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center as the only nephrologists.
- Phase 4 Stereo plans to move from Northgate Mile in April to a new location in Ammon east of Kmart. The new location is three time larger than the existing store, providing more room to demonstrate products such as large screen TVs, stereo systems, custom home products and theater setups. The new location also has large shipping bays to accommodate bigger vehicles.
- North Wind Inc. of Idaho Falls won a three-year contract from NASA worth \$182.6 million to \$305.2 million for environmental compliance and cleanup work at the White Sands test Facility in Las Cruces, N.M. North Wind shares the contract with five other companies. The contract period begins May 1. The

Idaho Falls-based North Wind has operations across over the United States and has over 300 employees.

Butte County

- The International Association of Machinists union was voted in by a two-thirds majority at the Naval Reactor Facility at the Idaho National Laboratory by Bechtel Bettis employees. Although the facility has almost 1,000 employees, the union only affects 222 employees. The Naval Reactor Facility is co-owned by the U.S. Departments of Defense and Energy. This is the first time a union has represented this group of technicians at INL although another union, Eastern Idaho Metal Trades Council, represents another 140 workers at INL.

Fremont County

- St. Anthony was awarded a \$500,000 Idaho rural development grant to provide infrastructure support for Summit Truss Company’s proposed 20,000 square-foot building. The grant will provide funding to install sewer, water, roads and power to Summit’s site, which is part of a larger business park, and paves the way for other companies to build there. Of the project’s estimated \$925,000 cost, the St. Anthony City Council will provide \$125,00, Summit will contribute \$200,000 and the grant provides \$500,000. The remaining \$100,000 is estimated property value of the park. After the building is completed, slated for August, the company estimates it may hire up to 40 people.

Teton County

- Teton County School District voters passed a \$12.25 million bond in March to fund a new middle school for grades six through eight, allow third through fifth grades to remain in the existing middle school and return kindergarten to the elementary schools. The high school will also be expanded to accommodate overcrowding.

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